

April 7, 2009

BERWYN, PA—On April 7, 2009, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) attended a student recital at the Timothy School in Berwyn, Pa. , where the students sang songs about all of the states in America. The Timothy School teaches students with autism, many of whom are nonverbal, and singing is an important part of their language therapy. The Congressman was introduced by the school's Executive Director Judy D'Angelo to speak to parents and staff about his support for special needs education.

Congressman Sestak has introduced legislation to improve the level of care provided to military children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). In the last session of Congress, Congressman Sestak successfully placed an amendment into the National Defense Authorization Act that enhanced the funding and research for autism for military families, increasing it by 100 percent. This new legislation would ensure treatment which is considered medically necessary for a child with ASD will be covered by TRICARE for military families.

“Providing improved coverage for autism therapies for military families will have far reaching effects for non-military families who are currently fighting for autism insurance reform in many states across the country,” said Congressman Sestak. “We cannot allow our children with autism to be shortchanged. With access to the right, medically-necessary, evidence-based therapies like Applied Behavioral Analysis, these children can make incredible gains and reach their full potential.”

“I believe that we have an obligation to provide the same affordable, quality and accessible care that I received in the Navy to the many military and civilian children who suffer from autism every day. As the Senate begins consideration of this legislation, I hope that my colleagues will do what is in the best interest of our nation's heroes and set an example for state legislatures, so that autistic children benefit from the best possible care and have the ability to provide for themselves as adults.

Also, Congressman Sestak was a strong advocate for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“stimulus bill”) which provides \$12.2 billion for grants for IDEA funding for special education.

The Timothy School was established in 1966 as a non-profit school for children with autism. It is the oldest non-profit school in Pennsylvania devoted exclusively to the educational needs of children with this disability. Today, they teach 63 children, ages five to sixteen, referred by 27 school districts located in five counties within the southeastern region of Pennsylvania.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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